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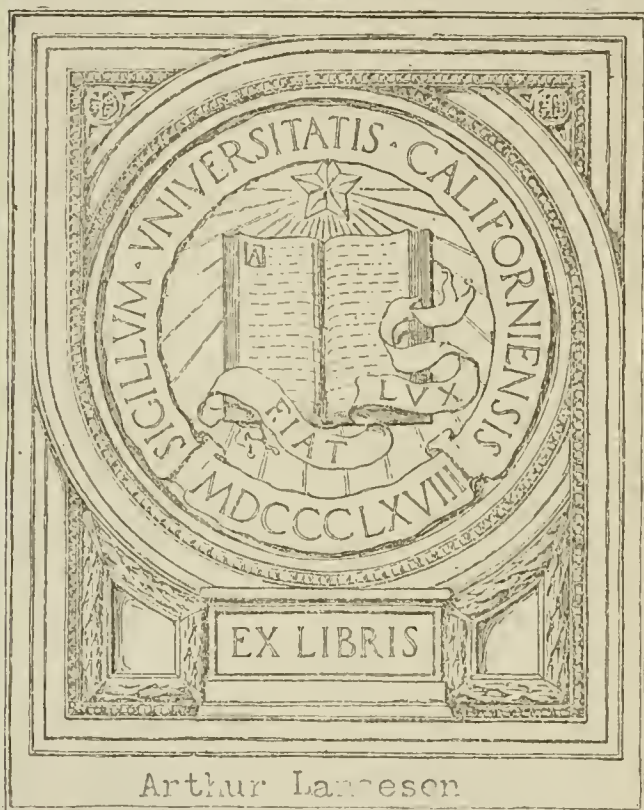


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The National Cult in Japan.

A Roman Catholic Study of its
Opposition to Evangelisation.

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The National Cult in Japan.

Its Hindrance to Evangelisation.

A ROMAN CATHOLIC VIEW.

[We translate the following remarkable article from "*Les Nouvelles Religieuses*," a Roman Catholic Journal of Paris.]

In 1912 Mr. Basil Hall Chamberlain, one of those European scholars who have most minutely studied the language, manners, and institutions of the Japanese, pointed out to his English compatriots a phenomenon which it was strange to find on the threshold of the twentieth century and of which the theatre was the Empire of the Rising Sun. This was nothing less than the invention of a national religion, to which, the Japanese Government thinks the whole people should rally, without distinction of particular beliefs, for the realisation of a sacred and patriotic union about the throne of a divine dynasty.

It was not, to tell the truth, a wholly new creation, and the Government would deny any wish to impose a religion on the Japanese people. It was intended only to make common to the whole of the country the practice of what was called a national cult. The materials as well as the spirit of this cult were borrowed from the traditions of Shinto, the really Japanese religion, so far as regarded the Imperial Ancestors and the national heroes. From the primitive religion which, on the one hand, deifies the forces of Nature, and, on the other, renders divine honours to the celestial ancestors of the Imperial Family and to certain Emperors and heroes, such as to the spirits of the soldiers who fell for their country in the recent wars, only

the latter elements were taken, as these alone were capable of becoming the objects of a national cult. This cult was, besides, officially separated from the Shinto religion; a special bureau was created for it, independent of the bureau which administers religious affairs whether Shinto or Buddhist. Special functionaries were put over the national temples, distinct from the Shinto priests. Among national temples are counted chiefly the antique shrine in the province of Ise, which is rebuilt every twenty years and is devoted to Amaterasu, goddess of celestial light and the first divine ancestress of the imperial Dynasty, and, at various places, other temples erected either in honour of Amaterasu, of her celestial descendants, or of her terrestrial grandchildren, the deified Emperors, as well as temples where, paying a patriotic tribute of honour and of votive offerings, the souls of the soldiers who fell gloriously in the Chinese and Manchurian campaigns for their country and Emperor, are invoked. The temple which has been constructed at Tokyo in honour of the late Emperor should also be mentioned—the Emperor whose illustrious reign witnessed the development of modern Japan, called Mutsuhito living, but now by the name borrowed from the era of his reign—Meiji, or Glorious Rule.

There is, properly speaking, nothing new in the "invention" of the Japanese Government except the plan to get the national cult adopted by all the citizens of the Empire, and the care which it has taken, by the official measures describ-

ed, to safeguard the religious liberty proclaimed in the Constitution of 1889, and to deprive everybody of any pretext for shunning a participation in the cult, which is considered in certain circumstances as the accomplishment of a civic duty.

The Japanese Government's plan inevitably appears a strange one from a Western point of view, considering all that has been told us of the modernisation of Japan, for it takes us back twenty centuries into the past to the time of ancient Rome and its deified Emperors. The Japanese official, no doubt, would refuse his assent to this analogy, but it cannot fail to strike all who succeed in seeing through the Oriental equivocation in which it is disguised. And for this very reason the national cult of Japan presents not only an ethnographical phenomenon worthy of the study of scholars, but also a problem of exceptional gravity for those who are interested in the future of Christianity in the Empire of the Rising Sun. This is why, in the *Nouvelles Religieuses*, we believe it will be of some use to set the whole question before Catholic and even Liberal opinion.

With this in view we propose, first, to make a study of the motives and objects of the Japanese Government in this institution of a national cult; secondly, the means adopted for its inculcation in the entire country; thirdly, the difficulties which it has created in the evangelisation of Japan, and fourthly, what means may, if not prevent, at least lessen, the dangers (to evangelisation).

I.—MOTIVES AND OBJECTS OF THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT IN THE INSTITUTION OF THE NATIONAL CULT.

To understand how the Government has come to conceive that it can succeed in the realisation of a plan which no European Government has ever dreamt of attempting, we must first understand the special conditions under which authority exercises itself in Japan. Notwithstanding the modern organisation of the Japanese State, working with a Ministerial Cabinet, a parliamentary system, and the various branches of administration imitated from European constitutions, the Sovereign maintains always a high spiritual authority in accordance with his title of *Tenno heika*, Emperor of Heaven. His dynasty is bound up in the religious traditions of the country with the Goddess of Celestial

Light and the other divinities which the history taught in the schools piously records as the Imperial Ancestors. The reigning Emperor is even susceptible, after his death, like his predecessor, of passing into the ranks of the divinities of the Japanese Olympus. The proper national religion, Shinto, procures from the distant past the consecration of this state of things.

Thanks to this situation, the only one of its kind in the whole world, the Imperial authority vested in the Government of the country can extend its sphere of action to the moral and spiritual domain, and imitate the example of the ancient Emperors who promulgated edicts to regulate the moral and religious conduct of their people. It was thus that the late Emperor set forth for the nation, in his Rescript on Education, the ethical code which forms the base of the moral instruction in all the schools of the Empire.* If the Constitution of 1889, which recognised, after the example of European constitutions, the religious freedom of the subjects of the Empire, does not permit the Imperial authority to recommend officially any religious belief, to the exclusion of others, the high spiritual position of the Emperor at least permits his Government to exert itself to interpenetrate the masses, under colour of a civil national cult, with the Shinto doctrines of a divine Imperial ancestry.

However, in the conception and the pursuit of this programme of penetration, the Government is not only obeying a traditional sentiment of religious veneration towards the Imperial Dynasty, but also a set of general ideas that have spread among intellectual circles in Japan and are implicit in the patriotic conscience, in the history of Japan and of some European countries, and in the experience of contemporary events. The administrators of the Empire are convinced that the national cult is necessary to the country, first, for the maintenance of the traditional spirit which is regarded as the living soul of the Japanese nation; secondly, for the realisation of a national unity about the Imperial Throne, and to bind by sacred ties the people and their Emperor;

* A general idea of the aspect of the Rescript can be got from one of its precepts: "Should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State, and thus guard and maintain the propriety of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth."

thirdly, because to the Japanese people a superior ideal, a religion, a cult, is necessary; fourthly, because, except this national cult, there is no religion that can answer the purpose of the plan pursued; fifthly and lastly, because fidelity to the Emperor and the sacred unity of the country guaranteed by the common national cult constitute the strongest possible dam against a flood of foreign ideas believed to be subversive of the social order.

The Soul of Japan.

We must now develop these points in order the better to grasp the objective and Japanese side of the question which occupies our attention.

(1) Those who consider that Japan, in the course of her history, has never ceased to borrow from other countries their arts, their industries, their laws, their customs, their institutions, their philosophy, and their religion, and that she has displayed in the last fifty years an extraordinary faculty for assimilation with regard to our modern organisations, would perhaps be inclined to believe that this country lacks a well-defined character of its own. But this would be a grave error. Japan has a national spirit, and is very conscious of it, exalting it under the name of *Yamato damashii*—the Soul of Japan—and ready to defend it jealously in the heart of the Japanese islands against all influences which may seem deleterious. In assimilating foreign importations, too, the principle which they follow, and which they invoke constantly, is this: "Take from the foreigner what good things he has and Japonise them; reject whatever is contrary to the national constitution." It is in the name of this principle that Japan has Japonised Buddhism and that, after welcoming St. Francis Xavier and the first propagators of the Gospel, she brusquely closed her doors to Christianity and to the "dangers" of European trade—according to the edict of Tokugawa Ieyasu, promulgated in 1614. It was, accordingly to the terms of that edict, because it was considered that Christianity was opposed to the traditions of the country, and hostile to the Way of the Gods and to Japanese Buddhism, that it was persecuted and ostracised for two hundred and fifty years. In our day we have seen it repeated to wearisomeness in various Japanese publications that Japan intends to take of European civilisation only the material things, and none of the spiritual, in which it finds its own traditions sufficient. However, there is by general consent a departure from this ex-

clusiveness, for the purpose of borrowing from Christianity its works of social beneficence, and an acceptance of certain moral theories—always in the spirit of eclecticism and of assimilation to that Japonism of which we have spoken. And if at certain epochs, and particularly at the outset of her modern evolution, it has appeared as though Japan were about to take over a large measure of European ideas, she corrected herself, after her military, political, and industrial successes, and, conscious of her force and her independence, attached herself with more strength than ever to those old traditions momentarily suspected of being a clog on progress.

Emperor and People.

(2) The national cult of the Imperial Ancestors and the halo that it creates about the dynasty and the august person of the Sovereign, appeared to a great number to be the best safeguard of national unity and the guarantee of the strength and progress of the country. The history of Japan teaches that when the Mikado remained apart from the effective government of the Empire, the country, delivered up to the ambitious rivalry of the great feudatories, was a prey to discord and civil war. The Imperial Restoration, accomplished in 1867, having put an end to this state of things, it was necessary that, having emerged from her savage isolation and entered resolutely into the arena where the Powers struggled for supremacy, Japan should concentrate all her energies about the descendant of the principal star of the heavens and that the constellations of the ancient principalities should be relegated to the darkness. On the other hand, the knowledge they have acquired of the oversettings of politics and dynasties, of revolutions, of crises, and of periods of flux in European history, as well as their own historic experiences, have convinced those who direct the destinies of Japan that they were happy to find in the spiritual character of the Imperial authority all facilities for inculcating in the people veneration and submission towards their Emperor, fortifying by sacred ties the fidelity of the nation to the Sovereign, and affirming national unity.

Duties of the "Three Faiths."

(3) Further, in the official world, thoughtful men, taught by their studies and their foreign investigations, are convinced that the life of a people can only be kept up to the point of duty and dis-

posed to the sacrifices which the service of the country exacts if it is rooted in a faith at once patriotic and religious. This is the theme which, some years ago, Mr. Tokonami, Vice-Minister for Home Affairs, elaborated in a pamphlet on the impressions he had received during a voyage of inquiry in Europe on the subject of religion. And in a congress in which he called together, in 1912, representatives of the religions established in Japan, he succeeded in passing the following resolution: "The three faiths, Buddhist, Shinto, and Christian, shall undertake, each according to its own methods, to serve the cause of the Imperial House and to safeguard the morals of society."

Christianity a Danger to the Country.

(4) Though, however, the Home Minister of that time adopted towards Christianity a liberal attitude, conformable with the terms of the Constitution of 1889, which recognised religious liberty, there lack not in the official world and among the professors and other intellectuals who direct Japanese opinion, men definitely hostile to Christianity, in which they see nothing less than a "danger to the constitution of the country." From the Press, as well as from public rumour, could be collected plenty of allusions to secret instructions by the Ministers of War and of Education, to officers or to teachers, pointing out to them this danger and dissuading them from embracing Christianity. But we have no wish to make use of anything but what is published in broad daylight and significant declarations.

In 1893 Dr. Inouye Tetsujiro, on his return from the German universities, published a pamphlet against Christianity, pretending to demonstrate that it is contrary to the good of the country. As for that, he laid it down that the Empire of Japan rests on faith in the divine founders of the nation and on the religious ancestor-cult. While the true national religion assures—by the practice of the two cardinal virtues of Japanese morality, fidelity to the Emperor and filial piety—the maintenance of the dignity of the Empire and the prosperity of the country, Christianity, by its chimerical ideals, only misleads men away from the proper path. A patriot who is also a sensible man cannot be at the same time a Christian and a Japanese.

In 1906 Dr. Kato Kiroyuki, who was President of the Imperial University, maintained, in his book "Our National

Constitution," that Christianity, with its doctrine of One God, and of man universally fallen into sin, was in the highest degree injurious to the sacred majesty of the Imperial Dynasty. "Having been given," said he, "an organisation unique in the whole world, which makes of the Japanese people one great family, under the paternal ægis of the Emperor, only the Imperial Ancestors and the Emperor can be the objects of supreme veneration and worship. To place above them the 'one true God' of the Christians is a thing absolutely incompatible with our national constitution. . . . The morality of a world religion like Christianity is very apt to come into conflict with our national and patriotic morality. . . . The double authority which such a religion creates necessarily makes civil and religious authority like a double nervous system in one organism."

A Violent Attack.

Lastly, in 1916, a great review* published in Tokyo, the *Dai Kokumin*, devoted several numbers to this object, "The Extermination of Christianity." The object of these publications was referred to in the following terms: "Christianity is essentially destructive of the national spirit; it imperils the constitution of the country; it is a perverse and anti-patriotic sect which it is necessary that we should forthwith exterminate, failing which we shall repent later on. So we intend to riddle them with our sharpest darts and to expel these insolent and rebellious Christians." The cover pictures of these numbers represented Christianity in the form of a terrified man or of a woman in tears, with the lower parts those of a dog, in a posture of humiliation, and about to be crushed under the foot of an ancient samurai or under an enormous hairy fist bearing the characters "The Soul of Japan."

The ordinary editors and scribes of the review made the most violent attacks on Christianity and certain of its works (particularly those of the Salvation Army). Nevertheless numerous professors of the Imperial University, presidents of High Schools, officers, high officials, and even the Minister of Education

* The *Dai Kokumin*, though on this occasion it got some distinguished contributors, is anything but a "great" review. The writer possibly confused the name with that of the well-known paper the *Kokumin*.—Ed., *Japan Chronicle*.

of that time lent their support with various articles. Several of them elaborated the theme that the religion of the Emperor is the true religion of Japan. One of them wrote: "The nexus of national unity lies in the authority, the religion, of the Emperor. The Emperor is Divinity made manifest. Such is the faith of the Soul of Japan." Or again, "The Emperor is the living God—the crystallisation of our national ideal." Or yet again: "Marshal N— told the officers of his division that those among them who professed the Christian religion could not be truly faithful to the Emperor and to the love of their country. These words are most true, for the sectaries of a perverse religion, looking only to Christ, cannot have a proper respect for the Imperial dignity."

We are sure that the Japanese Government did not approve of the violence of certain attacks in the *Dai Kokumin*, and that the official censor has had reason to regret having allowed vile anti-Christian caricatures to appear—these having been reproduced, with their titles, by some of the American ministers for the benefit of their compatriots. Nor do we believe that the men of weight who direct the affairs of the country, suspect Christianity, as do so many Japanese, official and other, of promoting the dissemination of democratic and other ideals subversive of the national constitution. And we believe that the common sentiment in the higher official spheres is not only that they ought to tolerate Christianity, because they cannot do otherwise, but that it will be serviceable, like Buddhism and Shinto, provided that it will consent,—if not, like these other faiths, to give positive support to the national cult, at least to permit the mass of the faithful to adhere to it.

Dangerous Political Views of Christians.

(5) But among Western ideas and theories, there are some of which the Government particularly fears the dissemination in the country. They experienced this danger, besides, when, some seven or eight years ago, a plot by a score of anarchists against the life of the Emperor was discovered. It was found that a certain number of the conspirators had frequented Protestant church meetings, and this contributed not a little towards the impression created in some minds that Christian propaganda is connected with the diffu-

sion of subversive ideas. Socialist and democratic theories became so suspect that even the name was sufficient reason for prosecution. While the Government believed that the social or political organisation of the country was destined to suffer in a greater or lesser degree from the influence of modern ideas, it was equally convinced that those dangers might be exorcised by placing the national constitution under the shelter of the secular temples. The Sovereign descended from divine ancestors, father and mother of his people, would grant his people, as celestial boons, the liberties and the institutions which the new needs and legitimate aspirations of the country demanded. Thanks to the national cult, the necessary transformations have been effected in the heart of the Empire without fear of those perturbations which have been in foreign countries the price of privileges real or illusory. In this way the Empire could continue without a shock its progressive march towards its ideal of power and expansion.

II.—MEANS ADOPTED OF PROMOTING THE NATIONAL CULT THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.

The means adopted by the Japanese Government for inculcating in the minds and habits of the population the practice of the national cult are partly hidden from us by the secrecy enveloping certain Ministerial instructions, which are addressed to military officers, to schoolmasters, and to Shinto and Buddhist priests. The accumulation of testimony from various quarters is sufficient to convince one of the existence of these instructions, and though their precise tenor cannot be learnt, the facts indicate its tendencies sufficiently. It cannot be denied, at least, that the custom, established during the last few years in all the schools subject to official direction, of taking the children to the temples of local tutelary deities or to the national temples on days when the spirits of the soldiers who die for their country are honoured, proceeded from a word of command emanating from a high quarter. It is known also that, besides the gathering of representatives of the three religions already referred to, where the Home Minister enjoined each of the religions to serve the cause of the Imperial House, several assemblies of Buddhist or Shinto priests, officially convoked, have been

held at Tokyo, and one may suppose, without fear of error, that the representatives of these two religions received detailed instructions.

In the domain of facts, testimony abounds of anti-Christian propaganda, of pressure, of vexations by officials, by Buddhist and Shinto priests, and by principals of schools, &c. Such and such districts are reported where bonzes and incumbents of the cult of the Gods denounce at public meetings the attitude of Christianity as running counter to national institutions, and accuse Christians of being traitors to their country. In one region, it is reported, the pedagogic body prevent scholars from attending Christian churches, and the masters and mistresses remonstrate severely with those of their pupils who do not obey the orders given on this subject. Principals of schools even assemble the parents of the local scholars and exhort them, in the name of patriotism, to turn their children from Christianity. They exhort them besides to guard strictly "the national secret," and not to impart to any foreigner the least part of what they have been taught. In primary schools where there is a body of Christian pupils who abstain from the official visits to the temples, the teachers treat these pupils as insubordinates, and demand of the Minister of Education disciplinary sanction for compulsory methods to make them return to their duty. Elsewhere Christian pupils, few in number, absent themselves on various pretexts. Those who state frankly that they must obey the injunctions of their religion, get themselves reprimanded and sometimes punished. At a certain High School a young man had the boldness to say that he had not attended a Shinto ceremony because his bishop had forbidden him to do so. Some days after, the principal of the school called on the parents to tell them that as their son's religion was not in accordance with the scholastic regulations, he had better cease to attend. A local paper started a campaign on this subject, denouncing the episcopal instruction as contrary to the principles of national education. It must be added here that the author of this article, an official of the Tobacco Monopoly, was dismissed for his excess of zeal, and that the young Christian, expelled from the school by a too chauvinistic principal, has been enabled to continue his studies. On the other hand, a certain number of young men had to leave one of the High Schools

through refusing to participate in one of the ceremonies of the national cult, the hostility of the professors and of their companions making their life insupportable. On the threshold of a Normal School, despite passing the entrance examination brilliantly, a young Christian girl found her name erased from the list of candidates admitted, because she replied conscientiously to the . . . question, "Whom do you regard as highest, your God or the Emperor?"

The Influence of Officials.

Outside the school world, where official pressure is chiefly exerted, many other facts may be gleaned. There is the matter of participation in the Shinto festivals at the coronation of the Emperor, the supply of contributions for the construction of a temple in honour of the Emperor Meiji, and other ceremonies and contributions. In such affairs the vexatious conduct of petty officials often comes out in strong relief. Doubtless the excessive zeal of these men would not be approved in high places, but, though they lack tact in certain circumstances, their general attitude indicates the sources from which they draw the inspiration which they overpass. The Government of the country which invented the art of defence known as *jujutsu* (literally the art of suppleness) is too clever and too modern to believe that it can attain its ends by means of vexatious methods and open persecution. It would prefer rather to enlist the consciences of the people in the national cult, insisting on the essentially secular character to which it pretends to have reduced it.

We have shown at the beginning of this article the measures which have been taken in pursuit of this design. High functionaries know when to refer to these in order to disarm opposition or to salve consciences. Thus, a few years ago the Governor of an important city thought it politic to summon to his residence a Catholic prelate, accompanied by a missionary, in order to explain to them the official point of view. In an interview which lasted two hours he explained to his guests the purely civil nature of the ceremonies of the national cult. On the subject of the word *kami*, the designation in Japan of those superior beings which are honoured by cults, and which is translated in our European languages as divinity (the Japanese language having, properly speaking, no other word to

correspond to that idea), this high official gave the following explanation: "Although the word *kami* continues to be used in the national cult, it has in no way the meaning of a *supernatural* being, which you give to it. It connotes only illustrious men, benefactors of their country. Consequently all Japanese, no matter what their religion, can pay them honour without doing violence to their conscience." The Governor concluded the interview with these words: "I will send you all the notifications of the Government on this question. You may study them at your leisure, and I have no doubt that you will willingly consent to enlighten your followers and to confirm their patriotism and loyalty towards the Emperor."

III.—DIFFICULTIES CREATED BY NATIONAL CULT IN THE EVANGELISATION OF JAPAN.

It must be said that the Government officials misunderstand the psychology of Catholics as well as the flexibility of the Catholic doctrine, when they appeal, as here seen, for the co-operation of missionaries so that their followers may, the practice of the national cult being tolerated, strengthen their patriotism and their loyalty to the Emperor. Certainly good Japanese, such as are all devout Catholics, have no need of participation in ceremonies which their faith improves and of which their enlightenment makes clear to them the [nature], in order to remain sincerely faithful to their Emperor and to give their fatherland first place in their affections. They would all declare, like Dominic Zenyemon, in the time of the persecutions of 1868 which came upon the Christians discovered by the missionaries newly arrived in Japan, "We are entirely obedient to the Head of the Empire. Only let us be Christians, and the Government will have no more faithful servants than us."

The atavistic distrust of the Japanese for one another—the fruit of civil wars and of certain only too common faults of character—the fundamental ignorance of Catholicism and of its influence on the conscience, and the confusion between Christian ideas and those social ideas which they consider dangerous, combine to prevent the official world (with a few honourable exceptions) understanding that the Japanese Christian, naturally

patriotic, may find in his Christian faith an extra stimulus to the performance of his civic duties and to the valiant acceptance of the sacrifices which his Emperor or his country may demand. The official world takes no account of the fact, however often it has been repeated, that the convictions of the Christian, who sees, according to the Christian doctrine of St. Paul, in the supreme head of the country a representative of divine authority, furnishes a basis for fidelity and submission towards the Emperor quite as serious as the Shinto mythology. If one may judge from repeated experiences it seems, moreover, that the mentality of the official world is incapable of understanding the motives with which the Catholic authorities refuse the compromise which is offered—motives of which the reply to the Governor mentioned above may be taken as an example.

Christian Reply to an Official Explanation.

"Catholics without exception," says this reply, "make it a patriotic and religious duty to be faithful subjects of his Majesty, to venerate him as one of the great ones of Japan and to honour those who have given their lives for the country. They would be happy to participate fully in all national festivals if the cult were a purely civil one. To their great regret, seeing how things actually are, they cannot grasp the distinction made by his Excellency. Besides, it is recognised by many Japanese scholars that the national temples are always considered religious edifices. For thousands of years that part of the temple called the *shinden* has been regarded as the seat of a divinity of supernatural attributes, while the other part, the *haiden*, is reserved for the worshippers. Can a simple Government Ordinance, without any other change, alter the usage of these temples and modify their character? Moreover, it is very difficult to regard the ceremonies observed as those of a purely civil cult. They are entirely drawn from the ancient Shinto ritual. The exorcisms and purifications, the opening of the door of the sanctuary, offerings of wine, of certain animals and certain plants, the prayers addressed to the supernatural beings who preside over the destinies of the Empire, all carry a distinctly religious seal. This is by no means a personal opinion, but is based upon facts and upon the definition of

the word religion. . . ." The reply added a word on the question of Chinese rites, with which the Shinto rites of the national cult present some striking analogies, and mentioned also the ceremonies of the Imperial cult of ancient Rome.

If then the Japanese Government refuses to admit the Catholic point of view, if it intends at all costs that the Christians should submit themselves, like the others, to the practices of the national cult, there will accrue difficulties for Christianity and for evangelisation in Japan which one cannot contemplate without disquiet. It is not a matter of apprehending any open persecution. That, indeed, would be a smaller thing to fear, for it would provoke a wholesome reaction. But there is plenty of room to fear underhand persecutions, vexations, village, district, family and clan ostracisms, lasting and even increasing. The opinions hostile to Christianity as a national danger and an enemy of the fatherland, which we have seen expressed by writers, professors, Shinto and Buddhist priests, may be entertained and propagated yet more widely, and may create considerable difficulties in the practice of their religion by the Christians already existing and still greater ones in the way of the propagation of the Gospel. The fear of being thought unpatriotic and traitorous to the country is the greatest trial which the feelings of patriotic honour, so deeply rooted in the heart of all the Japanese, can experience.

Nor is it possible to foresee whether, some day, the religious liberty protected by the Constitution may be limited. The text of the Constitution carries the construction that this religious liberty is granted on condition that public peace and order are not troubled. Hostile voices are already heard in the Press demanding the restriction of this liberty. Others, on the contrary, have expressed their apprehensions lest the text of the Constitution be found to furnish a pretext for these abuses. Whatever happens, it can be understood how those who have devoted their lives to making known in Japan the benefits of the Gospel, experience, as one or two of them have written, "serious and legitimate disquiet for the future of our holy religion when they see the recrudescence of Shinto (the cult of the Imperial Ancestors), the efforts, limited but constant, of the official world to make it the sole national cult, and the gradual advance of Japan towards Caesarism. . . ."

IV.—HOW TO PREVENT OR TO LESSEN THE DANGERS OF THE NATIONAL CULT.

What measures can be taken, in presence of the dangers which menace Christianity, if not to avoid them completely at least to lessen them to certain degree. This remains for our examination.

It would seem, first of all, that one might count on the progress of ideas, which would lead the Japanese, little by little, to recognise all that is [harmful] in the mythology which forms the basis of the divine origin of the Imperial Dynasty, so that at last the mirages which they adore will disappear from the sight of a more enlightened Japan. But that is a hope which appears ill-founded when one knows the Japanese mentality. This mentality has not the same exigence as ours with regard to the truth. What it demands of any system, religious or other, is not so much that it be supported by reason or by verified fact as that it shall produce results useful to the good order of society. The intellectuals and scholars of Japan, where modern scientific instruction has gone ahead, are not without a perception of the fantastic side of the primitive legends on which the Shinto religion is erected, but their spirit retains its symbolism, respects its profound mysteries, and would preserve with jealous care the traditional influence and above all the supernatural halo with which it invests the Imperial Dynasty.

The Teaching in the Schools.

In the Japanese history taught in the primary schools we read of the Goddess of Celestial Light, who is no other than the sun, and whom the [primitive] legends of the Kojiki show us, to take an instance, as withdrawing with daylight into a cave after a quarrel with her brother, the Tempestuous God, from which retreat the other gods got her to emerge by means of music and improvised burlesque dances. "His Majesty the Emperor's first ancestor," say the school-books, "was the great Goddess of Celestial Light. Like the rays of the sun his dignity reaches to the highest summits of sublimity and to the furthest limits of universality. Our Empire of Japan is that which, in the beginning, the great Goddess placed under the governance of her grandson, Niigi-no-mikoto. When she deigned to descend

upon it she said: 'This earth is the Empire which I give to my Imperial Posterity. Go, then, and govern it. Thy reign shall be a glorious one, and shall have no bounds but those of the heavens and the earth.' Thus deigned she to speak; and if our Empire has not been shaken for ten thousand generations, it is, without gainsaying, by virtue of this ancient promise."

Here is another example of the Japanese idealisation of primitive conceptions on the subject. . . . Writing on the Shinto cult, in one of the most intellectual of the magazines, the *Jidai Shicho*, in 1908, Mr. Ono Tokuzan said: "The Nature-cult, and the ancestral cult, carried to their highest and absolute terms, border upon the grand principle of the universe. Thus it is that the great Divinity Amaterasu is at once the ancestress of the Imperial House and of the Japanese people, a mysterious personage, a type of exalted wisdom and eminent virtue, the Sun which enlightens the earth, the manifestation of the great soul of the universe."

These citations would be perfectly easy to multiply, but they will doubtless suffice to show what waits upon progress in Japan so long as the intellectual and official world considers it needful that the Imperial dignity shall draw support from Shinto tradition.

We need not, in these conditions, discount the refulgent influence which the light thrown by Christian doctrine and its philosophic or apologetic teaching may have in dissipating the prejudices and mirages of the greater part of the Japanese intellectual world. To tell the truth, the best apology which Catholicism can oppose to the prejudices of the official world, the classes who direct the masses, is before all things the living apologia of the faithful, who, though they are yet but a little flock, can at least show the world that to the extent that they are good Christians they are also good citizens, devoted to the Emperor and to their country, and that nowhere can be found better guardians of morality, of good order, or of peaceful society.

Results of Visit of Papal Legate.

But there are other influences which may be exercised in favour of our threatened religious liberty. Among these, perhaps, will be the outcome of the proceedings of the Papal Legate to the Japanese Government regarding the participation of Catholics in the ceremonies of the national cult. When Monsignor Petrelli came, in February 1916, to bring to the new Emperor the congratulations of the Sovereign Pontiff on his coronation, he received from the Government and the people a universally sympathetic welcome. He returned in April 1917 to discuss officially with the Japanese Ministry the question of Shinto rites. The definite decisions which will have been come to by the Vatican as the outcome of these conferences we do not yet know. We only know that, after the last visit of the Apostolic Delegate, the local authorities in certain districts were instructed not to insist, in the case of Christians, on the fulfilment of the Ministerial ordinances regarding participation in the *shokonsai* (ceremonies in honour of soldiers who have died for their country), or to enforce the attendance of scholars at Shinto shrines, but that some vexatious pestering was still to be remarked here and there. We pray that this signal tolerance may be not merely a temporary phenomenon, but that the Imperial Government is, in lasting accord with the Vatican, assuring permanently to Catholic subjects the full exercise of their religious liberty.

For the rest, we are persuaded, by experience, of the considerable influence which foreign opinion has on the conduct of this country, that the Catholic and even the Liberal Press of the various countries of Europe and America may render immense services to the cause of evangelisation and religious tolerance in the Empire of the Rising Sun, by taking a lively interest in the question which we have here discussed. This, indeed, is the principal aim of this modest essay. May it be continued by more authoritative pens both in France and other countries, in the interest, not of religion alone, but also of all truth and justice, and, in a word, in the interest of this great and beloved Japanese nation.

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